

Medical Supply Recovery Organization (MSRO)

An interview with Laura Rodriguez, medical care initiatives manager

Providence is the only health system in the country with an in-house MRSO. The goal of this program is to reduce medical waste and meet the supply needs of medical facilities throughout the country and medical facilities operated around the world. For the last **30 years** this program has diverted many tons of usable medical supplies and equipment from landfills. Instead, with the help of thousands of dedicated volunteers, the program has brought health and hope to medically impoverished communities in over 100 countries and in the U.S. Below is an interview with Laura Rodriguez, the medical care initiatives manager and former manager of medical supply recovery partner relations.

1. Tell me about the MSRO program. When and how did it begin?

The work began 30 years ago by a gentleman who saw a need overseas and came up with the idea of sending unused supplies that would have been thrown away. He saw the vision of keeping these things out of the landfill and getting these supplies into the hands that needed them. Providence is the only health system in the country with an in-house MRSO. Our goal is to reduce medical waste and meet the supply needs of medical facilities throughout the country and medical facilities operated around the world.

The MSRO is part of the Resource, Engineering and Hospitality Group. We have been able to streamline and expand our operations. We are able to use the in-house transportation fleet, which has increased the number of our hospitals and clinics who participate in donating medical supplies. Our warehouse is embedded within REHG's operations, helping to save costs and leverage their best-practice logistics.

2. Who contributes and what do they donate?

The majority of the donations come from within our hospitals. Most of our hospitals in Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and Montana engage in the program.

While we have a list of acceptable medical supplies, we end up with a lot of items that still need to be thrown away. For instance, we get gloves, catheters, gowns, sometimes sophisticated machines that still have life and could be donated. All equipment is checked by a technician who comes in once month to verify equipment functionality so that it can be donated.

3. What is the impact?

Supporting partners in the U.S.: Medical supplies are donated to nonprofits and colleges around Washington State who cannot afford to purchase them. Thousands of pounds of

equipment and materials were welcomed by organizations such as: Tacoma Rescue Mission, Seattle Union Gospel Mission, Aids Housing Association, Metropolitan Development Council, Community Health Clinic, Catholic Community Services, Medical Reserve Corps, Bates Technical College, Tacoma Community College and Medical Equipment Bank.

Sending supplies overseas: Organizations working overseas receive supplies such as: bandages, gloves, IV sets, lab products, patient care products, surgical products and respiratory and radiology equipment. For medical relief workers – often PSJH clinicians – undertaking short-term work abroad, we provide supplies and equipment to be carried as hand luggage. For groups planning large-scale projects, we offer custom-packed shipments.

4. What is ahead?

We rely on hundreds of volunteers – both caregivers and community members – who are trained to sort and pack supplies at our warehouse, and we plan to grow this important engagement. We plan to continue expanding participation in donating supplies. Our partnerships, both domestic and international, will remain a vital part of maximizing our global impact. Through all of these efforts, we know we can have an even greater impact in reducing waste and enhancing community benefit by diverting the surplus that is generated by the health care industry.

5. How do ministries get started?

The way ministries can get started is by identifying champions who care about helping others and keeping these supplies out of the landfill. Identifying a location for all the supplies, communications, and word of mouth – specifically, instruct others about how these supplies will change people’s lives. Motivate people to notice. Elevate to caregivers that there are supplies that are perfectly usable that will otherwise end up in a landfill.

Want to learn more about MSRO?

Review [this presentation](#) for steps on how to implement the MSRO program at your ministry. For more information contact: [Laura Rodriguez](#), medical care initiatives manager, or [Michele Schneider](#), manager, supply chain operations.